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533 earliest ancestors, and the text is commonly grandiloquently
*556 phrased.[19] Frequently the singers alter the words slightly to
suit the occasion, and sometimes compose entirely new words
[171] for an old tune. As they sing, they are aided by some of X's
friends who rise and stand between the fire and the front door.
[532] They occasionally wear forehead masks carved with his crest
to add dignity to the rite.

203 After the song the chiefs continue their meal, and there is
● 522 much practical joking with the heralds.
*556 "Don't you want some food?" X calls to one of them.
Without waiting for an answer he throws a box containing the liquid pulp, inclined at such an angle that the mess is spattered over the recipient. Occasionally, a herald will succeed in catching a box without spilling the contents, but usually he is smeared from head to foot, while the spectators shriek with laughter. It is one of the functions of a herald to be a laughing stock for the visitors.

*556 During the afternoon X's wife and the members of her
583 family deliver to him the goods which they have amassed to "re-buy" her from her husband. These are called "washing material," as if they supplied X with wash-basin and toilet necessities. The speaker orates how the wife has lived up to her obligation in making this presentation, and how it will clear the path for her children. These goods will later on be distributed by X. They can be used for:

(1) Repayment of potlatch debts, or

(2) Making potlatch investments, or

(3) Validating names, either *sisaok* or ancestral, for the children of his relatives.

It would be most disgraceful should any of the goods be applied to validating *sisaok* names for any of X's own children, because they have come from his wife's people and react to the advantage of her children in any case. These goods are

[19] Though not to the same extent as among the Kwakiutl where the words may describe how the sky is supported on a chief's shoulders, or how he has pushed his head into the land above.

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sion by repeating loudly a few words, or even phrases, from the speeches being delivered, or calling on the audience to notice what has just been said and to listen attentively. A white man would be annoyed at such interruptions, but the Bella Coola consider them evidences of attentiveness.

The making of comments is a duty performed at every type of ceremony, but it is indispensable at potlatches; since a chief depends on the heralds to emphasize and explain the points of his family history which are being displayed. One intelligent man likened their functions to a compass, constantly guiding the course of ceremonial life. Without a herald a chief would be as useless as a ship tossed on the ocean with no hand to steer. Although the principal duty of heralds is to extol the actions of a chief, they can, and are expected to, deride one who fails to carry out the customary requirements. Cases have occurred in which influential men have so far forgotten their function of generosity as to fail to invite their fellows after killing a deer or other large animal; or women have declined to share their abundant berries. Nothing is said at the time, but when next the people have come together for some ceremony, a herald refers to the omission under so slim a disguise that everyone is aware of his meaning. This public ridicule lowers the prestige of a chief to such an extent that he is careful not to offend again. Not many years ago, a certain Kimsquit chief failed to ask others to share some mountain goats which he had killed; at the first opportunity a herald referred to himself as *Yeki*, Mountain Goat, and all present realized that he was really alluding to the one who had been remiss.

Heralds must exercise care in their witticisms at the expense of chiefs because, unless public opinion is with them, the point of the remark is lost, and they expose themselves to the wrath of the person offended. Nevertheless, heralds always strive to cause merriment, and often take risks with this aim in view. They try to make humorous remarks, and also to cause amusement by their antics. As already described, the donor of a potlatch may throw to one of them a dish containing liquid food

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203 in such a way that the contents dribble over the recipient;
● 522 sometimes, though able to catch the dish, a herald may
*556 deliberately allow the sticky pulp to cover him. The humour of this is increased by the fact that guests at potlatches always receive their food in a ceremonious manner.

203 Though one of a herald's duties is to act as buffoon, his
*556 position is only very slightly derogatory. In the beginning of time, Raven himself did not hesitate to act in this capacity on
[773] many occasions. Ever since, the post has usually been occupied by relatives of chiefs, especially by those who are unable to give potlatches. In some cases the position is sought by ambitious young men, willing to endure the slight loss of dignity for the emoluments. Since the basic principle of every Bella Coola ceremony is that the donor must recompense those who have assisted him, heralds are always lavishly rewarded. At potlatches especially, chiefs remember their dependence upon the heralds, and shower presents upon them. One who has allowed himself to be spattered with liquid food to amuse the guests, is suitably compensated, but in any case he receives presents for summoning and seating the guests and for interrupting the speeches. The same principle holds good in all other ceremonies. An elderly informant related that once in his younger days he had been dancing a *susaok* dance, when two heralds remarked that the ground on which he was dancing was dirty, meaning, that it had not been made clean by the distribution of sufficient presents to justify his dance. His mother at once gave the heralds two muskets, valuable articles in those days, to clear her son's path. These belonged to the informant, who knew nothing about the transaction until it had been completed, but he accepted as a matter of course the necessity of giving presents to heralds. If the seat on which a chief is sitting should break, presents must be given to heralds, and if a *kusiut* should fall when a herald is watching, the latter
[622] receives gifts. At the marriage of a chief's son, a herald can
[585] claim and remove any of the clothing of the bridegroom or his associates. Above all other occasions, when a young chief is

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to force his attentions on a slave woman if she objected, although her refusal would be most unusual on account of his prestige. There were no professional prostitutes; a man usually gave a small present to a girl from whom he had received favours, and she was expected to give him a little, dainty basket filled with undyed cedar-bark to use as a sponge. Such relations appear always to have been of common occurrence. Today, as formerly, a man's morality is considered to be his own affair; laxity may lower his prestige, but no law is broken, and his neighbours laugh and chaff him about it. In fact, sexual matters are discussed with the greatest freedom, and a person who has been caught is mocked mercilessly. When visiting a foreign tribe, a man sometimes lives with a woman and, on parting, composes and sings a song describing her charms. One man did this after living with a Kitlobe woman, and on his return to Bella Coola found that some of his fellows had learnt it in some unexplained manner; they used to sing it to him, much to their amusement, in part to his own, and somewhat to the annoyance of his wife. This perhaps illustrates rather clearly the attitude of the Bella Coola to an infraction of morality—where no marriage rite has been broken; it is amusing rather than disgusting. There are no times when the moral code ceases to function. At potlatches, and also at *kusiut* dances, there appears always to have been a certain amount of laxity, although this was strictly prohibited within the house where the ceremony was taking place. Such behaviour is due to the excitement and stimulus of a large gathering, not to anything connected with the rites themselves.

Perverted sexual desires, like other matters connected with the relations of the sexes, are regarded as concerning the individual alone. Sodomy appears to be unknown. Intercourse by pre-adolescents is held to be disgusting, but carries with it no social ostracism. Incestuous union, however, is mildly anti-social; it exposes the offender to secret contempt, but does not interfere with his attainment of whatever position his wealth

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air, throwing his arms around as if demented, and at times hurling his rod to the floor where the nail prevents it from falling, much to the amazement of the uninitiated. He stoops to pick it up, reverses it, again throws it to the ground, and again lifts it up, all the time gyrating on himself. Finally, with a rush and a leap, he disappears behind the screen whence he came. One of the senior *kukusiut*, selected for the purpose on account of his knowledge and intelligence, is stationed near the enclosure, and as soon as the supernatural being disappears he explains to non-members who was the visitor. The ever-talkative *Ăno°likwolsaix* confirms and supplements his remarks.

The next to appear is a *mätsqus*, a wooden figure about two and a half feet in length with proportions equal to those of a toad. It emerges from the matting at one side of the house, and by means of concealed ropes is made to hop across the floor and return. Behind it there appears a masked male figure carrying a huge wooden hammer; the *kukusiut* shriek, "Kill! Kill!" and the man strikes at the toad-like creature. It has been made in two sections which can be pulled apart by a skilful manipulation of the ropes; this is done as the hammer descends so that it strikes a bladder filled with red dye in the interior. The colouring spatters in all directions like blood, but after a short interval the animal is pulled together and hops off to the enclosure. The *kusiut* announcer tells the uninitiated:

"That is a toad from the land above, a *mätsqus*, which came to visit X. It will soon return to its own home."

After a short pause to let the effect of the last apparition sink in upon non-members, the *kukusiut* raise the cry:

"Look up there."

A porcupine emerges from a small hole in the matting and crawls down a plank, then turns and goes back, pulled by ropes invisible in the semi-gloom. The figure consists of a real skin carefully stripped off and stretched over a wooden framework. The announcer declares:

"It is a porcupine from above, come to visit X."

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Two clowns now appear together. Each wears a mask,

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representing a man whose mouth is open and whose face is wrinkled in a grin spreading from ear to ear. They go around the fire laughing and playing, rolling on the floor and indulging in all kinds of antics, with constant fits of laughter, so deep that it seems to come from their stomachs. Only one or two men in the community can make the hoarse sound required, and they are always asked to appear as comedians. They are entitled to make witticisms, often of an obscene nature, at the expense of any of the spectators, and the *kukusiut* always join in laughter at the victim. Sometimes the singers beat out a short tune and the performers dance clumsily, to the amusement of all. When they have withdrawn, the announcer explains that these two spend their time in the land above playing and jesting. If the preliminaries are long delayed, the clowns may be sent out to keep the audience amused while waiting for the more important beings.

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The Hermaphrodite next emerges. As previously described, he dances around the fire, singing in a peculiar nasal twang, intermediate between the voice of a man and a woman. Few men can do this satisfactorily. When the Hermaphrodite has disappeared, the announcer explains that he always remains outside the house in the land above where he plays with a number of women who stay there, and over whom he is lord. His face is that of a woman, his voice that of a woman, but he has masculine characteristics as well.

Then comes *Sxaiaxwax*, clad in a blanket of evergreen boughs and wearing as ugly a mask as the maker can devise. The pattern varies according to the skill and originality of the carpenter; a common design is that of a snout-like mouth, somewhat resembling a pig with eyes askew. *Sxaiaxwax* cannot speak, but he dances around the fire spitting, blowing, and making inarticulate sounds in his throat. When he has gone, the announcer explains that *Sxaiaxwax* is a very evil being who spends all his time trying to seduce girls, especially those who play with the Hermaphrodite outside *Nusqulxwaista*. With them he never succeeds, but sometimes he comes to this earth

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[The Dance of Thunder]

verbal to physical arguments, and one occasion is remembered when the latter was shoved from a canoe into the river. 575* 796* 776

In the evening the *kukusiut* are first called in, to be followed by the uninitiated in due course. Thunder dances in the manner already described, though, if possible, with even more vigour and abandon than when he was only one of the performers in the Mystery dance. As recorded in that dance, he performs twice, on the second occasion carrying a rattle containing burning shreds of cedar-bark. After each circuit of the central fire, Rainwater appears and drenches the audience, as rain accompanies a thunder-storm. The dramatic skill displayed is always impressive, and a touch of comic realism is added by the reiterated remarks of *Tłoqots* who does his utmost to belittle Thunder. [522]

The time-beater for the expert dancer, *Nixɫs*, appears after Rainwater. When the ceremonial is carried out with care, he wears a skull mask to show that he is a ghost who has come from the land below in answer to the call of *Alxwolātinum*. As he beats time he sings a wordless song of the dead. The skill of *Nixɫs* as a dancer is due to the fact that he is a yearling mountain goat among supernatural beings. The uninitiated look forward with eagerness to witnessing a remarkable dance, but after a few violent contortions the performer withdraws, followed by the musician. [532] [533]

It would be needless repetition to enumerate all the supernatural beings who follow, so mention will be made only of those who are considered especially appropriate to the Thunder dance and who are accordingly shown on almost all occasions. Winter Wren is a masked figure which hops about in an agile manner similar to that of the bird on this earth, and Rabbit likewise imitates the movements of an earthly rabbit. *Ano'likwoltsaix* explains to the uninitiated that Thunder would like to taste the flesh of mortals but that he is too big and too hot to approach them, so sends Mosquito as his messenger. The masked figure representing that insect carries a stick about one foot in length beneath his blanket, and runs around the house [532] [825]

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with short, mincing steps. At intervals he pulls forth his stinger and rushes at one of the spectators, poking the weapon at him and humming fiercely. The writer took the part of a supernatural mosquito at one of the dances held in the winter of 1922-3 and remembers the expression of fear on the face of a younger member of the audience when about to be "stung." The victim was certainly afraid on that occasion, and if that feeling could survive the break-down of belief, it is not to be wondered at that fear was universal in the days when the *kukusiut* were thought to be possessors of supernatural powers. Another being who often appears at a dance of Thunder is Rainwater-Dripping-from-the-Roof. The masked figure walks slowly around the fire and *Ano'likwelxaix* explains that this is the water which drops from a hole in the planking. The Clowns [522] are never omitted, and always cause amusement amid the gravity of the rite. One after another, the supernatural beings appear from the enclosure, circle the fire, and withdraw, accompanied by the sage remarks of *Ano'likwelxaix*. Finally there is a long pause, broken when a masked figure slowly toddles forth. It is Snail, who started at the same time as the other supernatural beings but arrived too late to be present at the dance of Thunder. Snail circles the fire and disappears. At this point the uninitiated are expelled and the rite concludes as usual.

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Dancers whose patrons are Thunder, Earthquake, Sun, or Moon do not confine their dances to the ceremonial season, but perform whenever a manifestation of their patron occurs. If Thunder is heard, no matter what the time of day or season of year, X stands up and cries out:

"It [he does not refer to Thunder by name] is dancing too lustily up aloft. *Xwe*···,"

[789] The call of *xwe*··· is thought to have a quieting effect on Thunder. Any *kukusiut* women present at once drone, then, accompanied by a number of his associates, X proceeds to the lowest house of the village where the same ritual is repeated. This is done in every dwelling, after which X returns home and

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[The Ghost Dance]

X's, where he is soothed by the four times repeated frenzied beating of sticks and his call returned whence it came.

During the rest of the ceremonial season X becomes mad at intervals and displays his insanity by rushing to every house and throwing dirt and sand. His *ɬaɬuxiut* escort is always with him, and the procedure is identical with that already recorded. X makes no recompense for the damage inflicted, so it is probable that his fellows do not regard his dance as an unmitigated pleasure, but nothing can be done to deter him from exercising his prerogative.

THE DANCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL CHARMER

Although the Bella Coola are probably as moral as members of any other tribe, they enjoy humour of an obscene nature, and a dance which never fails to provide amusement is that of the Supernatural Charmer. The patron of this is *Ixtmxtsimulk*, a beautiful, unmarried, feminine being who is also termed *Alíqmān i* and *Nuxkmāltsaix*. She is thought to disregard the efforts of her supernatural relatives to restrain her, and comes to this earth where she bestows her favours not only on human beings, but on animals. Her protégé at Kimsquit is a young man, *Ēālaiaks*, at Bella Coola, a young woman, *Kwalākmas*; like all other *ɬuxiut* names these can be used either by men or women. It is said that *Ēālaiaks*'s prerogative is derived from the experience of an ancestor in past ages, whereas that of *Kwalākmas* was initiated three generations ago by a very powerful chief. The ritual in each case is identical, so the dancer can be referred to as X. Each has the prerogative of singing not only of *Ixtmxtsimulk*, but also of the being known as *Wiwuistmaɬ*. Many masks are required at the *nɬuxam* of either of these beings, so it is customary for X to perform with respect to *Ixtmxtsimulk* one year, and to *Wiwuistmaɬ* at the next or a subsequent ceremonial season, though the actual songs always refer to both patrons.

When X wishes to dance he consults the marshals, obtains their consent, and then makes final arrangements on, normally,

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[The Dance of the Supernatural Charmer]

575 796 [532] each wearing the mask of a man and each with the clothing and distinctive marks of a particular tribe: Tsimshian, Haida, Bella Bella, Rivers Inlet, China Hat, Kitimat, Fort Rupert, Smith Inlet, Cowichan, and as many more as X has wished, not forgetting Bella Coola itself. On at least one occasion representations of a white man and of a Chinese were used. Sometimes instead of one, there are two of each tribe. Each figure pretends to be pursuing *Sximsximdt* and keeps up a running fire of complaints:

"She left me for a worthless man; oh! how unhappy I am," says one, and another adds:

"Alas, I enjoyed her only once."

Each uses his own imagination in making comments, frequently drawing on personal experiences with faithless women. *Ano'lkwolsaix* explains everything, and the heralds echo the remarks. *Sximsximdt* looks around for a handsome young *kusiut* woman and says to her:

"How many men have known you?"

The heralds repeat the question and tell the woman not to be bashful, but to speak the truth. It is considered excessively funny for her to answer a number in the hundreds, even more than the tale of *Sximsximdt*'s lovers. This is a time when obscene remarks are allowed and, indeed, expected. A short distance behind the hurrying procession of those who have loved *Sximsximdt* and are still allured by her, comes a supernatural being disguised under the mask of an old man. He is her father, who keeps giving her good advice and begging her to forsake her evil ways, but she pays no attention to him. Finally, just as she is about to leave, there enters an old, old man with white hair and a wrinkled face; he totters in leaning heavily upon a stick and calling to the woman to wait for him. She heeds him not, but goes out of the house while he staggers feebly around the fire, voicing his complaints and his appeals. *Ano'lkwolsaix* explains that he is *Simpetus*, who fell under the spell of *Sximsximdt* long ago in his youth, and for whom her beauty had such a fatal attraction that he has followed her

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[The Dance of the Supernatural Charmer]

ever since. Pity for strangers is not a strong Bella Coola sentiment and the audience laughs heartily at the spectacle of the doddering old man in vain pursuit of a heartless woman who is forever young. A considerable number of *kukusiut* always accompany the procession, pushing their way out with *Ano'likwolsaix* and *Simpteus*. Several of them carry whistles concealed beneath their arm-pits and the noise of these serves to maintain the dignity of the occasion.

So many masked figures are used that all cannot accompany *Sximsximdt* into each house. Those unable to do so remain on the sidewalk outside, holding one of her lovers, a live male mountain goat. At the next house another group of the charmer's victims enters and the ceremonial just described is repeated. The same is carried out at every dwelling in the village. *Sximsximdt* and her followers stop a few minutes at X's house before starting out on a second round, in which the same ritual is carried out. This is done twice more, so that each house is visited four times.

By this time dusk has fallen and all the *kukusiut* except those acting as escort to X have gathered in his house. Presently the uninitiated are called in. *Sximsximdt* is standing on a low box behind the fire, encouraging her masked lovers to come to her, and bestowing her affections indiscriminately in a heartless manner. The rivals shove each other to and fro realistically and though blows are not actually exchanged, great care must be taken to prevent masks from falling in the mock encounter. The efforts of the unfortunate *Simpteus* to reach his desire are always a source of merriment. *Ano'likwolsaix* as usual explains the significance of it all. Sometimes a cradle is brought in, over which *Sximsximdt* croons while a song is sung, describing her as the mother of many creatures of whom the fathers are animals. It is uncertain whether this part of the ceremony takes place before or after the sham fight or, indeed, whether it is not another type of *nuhuam* which X can use at will. The ritual concludes in the normal way with the expulsion of the uninitiated, the dancing of *Ano'likwolsaix*,

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[The Dance of the Supernatural Lover]

her house while the singers compose a new song. The theme is of her patron, the young male being, *K'wat'iwal'a*, "The Big One." It describes how he came from above and went far and near over the earth in lustful pursuit of women, how each victim fell in love with her seducer so that she followed him in all his wanderings, how Loon befriended him, and how he exchanged his blanket for a covering of abalone-shells.

On *nuxiutälaxp* when the *kukuxiut* as usual go to the forest, they bring back not only wood for masks but also the trunk of a large cedar tree, at which the carpenters work during the two succeeding days. On *nakuxaw* a parade occurs of the supernatural beings similar to that in the dance of the Supernatural Charmer, but the masked figures represent women, not men, [illegible] and pays no more attention to his mistresses than did *Xoimxoimult* to her would-be lovers. There is the same licence for lewd remarks, of which *K'wat'iwal'a* takes full advantage when he calls the attention of the young men to his following, and asks them how many mistresses each has had.

In the evening the uninitiated are called to X's house where the first object they see is the tree-trunk, converted by the carpenters into an enormous bird. Wooden wings and a loon's head have been provided and the whole is painted in imitation of a loon's plumage. *K'wat'iwal'a* is in evidence, wearing a bird disguise. Presently a matting enclosure in one of the rear corners of the house is thrown open, and the uninitiated see the throng of his mistresses who rush forth, almost coming to blows in their eagerness to reach their seducer. *Awitkwulaxis* stands on one side and explains the significance. After the mock combat has lasted for a few minutes, a Cannibal begins to growl and the uninitiated hurry out. The ceremonial then concludes in the usual manner.

This dance differs from all other *kwatsi* rites in one respect, since the call can come to X several times during a single ceremonial season. Of course there is no compulsion; she uses her own discretion as to whether she dance more than once,

[The Sun Dance]

Ans'lâkwulaxs, and two of the supernatural Clowns. In addition a white disk, about four feet in diameter, is ordered with a human face in the centre; this represents the Sun with *Alquntâm*. No detailed description is required until the night of *nukwum*. 575 796 [582]

The *dukwaiut* gather in the dusk and summon the uninitiated as soon as all is in readiness. On entering, they see the huge and imposing figure of *Alquntâm* standing in the centre of the space behind the fire, flanked by a number of the most important *dukwaiut* as if to pay respect to him. X stands immediately behind, repeatedly throwing one arm over *Alquntâm*'s head and crying *hoip* to soothe the visitor. The two Clowns move to and fro, all over the house, making what remarks they like as if they were spoilt children. *Ans'lâkwulaxs* stands on one side, explaining the meaning of it all and giving the names of the supernatural beings represented. Suddenly the white disk appears against the back wall near the roof, slowly passes sunwise across the house, and disappears. The uninitiated recognise that it is not the Sun, but to them it seems miraculous that this body can move as it does, and they easily accept *Ans'lâkwulaxs*'s explanation that this is the way *Alquntâm* crosses the heavens. They do not know that for the last two days the carpenters have been exercising their ingenuity in arranging cords so that the object can be drawn across smoothly and steadily. Again the sun "rises," and crosses the back wall, only to disappear from sight. This is repeated twice more, making four times in all. It is said that sometimes the Sun is made to spin just before it "sets," but the method could not be learnt. At this juncture the uninitiated are sent home and the proceedings conclude as usual. [522] [821]

In addition to performing in the customary manner, X is required to dance on other definite occasions, without the coming of a call. According to some informants, X must sing of his patron at the beginning of the ceremonial season, coincidently with the prestigi of *Nakkyum*. This is probably correct but details were unobtainable. In any case, when the [424]

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424 thing" into one of his companions. The recipient acts as if
575 blinded, staggering around the house and colliding with articles
796 of furniture or his fellows. One after another receives the
787 same present, until perhaps half the company are acting as if moving in a dense mist. Sometimes they reel from the house, falling into bushes and walking into the walls of other houses, as if deprived not only of sight but also of all sense of direction. The prerogative of Fog was given to *Nînitsamlaix* (II, p. 344), but many other *ɬukusiut* enjoy the same right from other sources. After a short interval, the dancer goes to the victim and makes the motion of drawing something from him, thus *recovering his sight and sanity. Fog is then returned aloft* in the manner described for a Hummingbird.

When first told of this custom, difficulty was experienced in visualizing the attitude of the *ɬukusiut* to what they realize is a mere dramatization, lacking the presence of the uninitiated to give it zest and purpose. When several performances of this type had been witnessed, the difficulty vanished. The *ɬukusiut* enter whole-heartedly into the spirit of the affair, regarding it as a game, and yet as a game in which they must acquit themselves creditably. Each recipient endeavours to
[522] excel his fellows in the realism of his performance, and his blind staggers never fail to cause merriment. The Bella Coola delight in acting, and this is an occasion on which they can indulge their tastes to the utmost, without fear of disaster if an error should occur, such as hampers them in the presence of the uninitiated. Moreover, each strives to assist the performer, and these two reasons combine to make the whole a success.

Although these prerogatives are often used on the nights of *ɬxastêmen* and *nusiatâlsp*, the time most suitable for their appearance is during the ritual of *sewadjut*, which may be translated as, "The Restful Ceremony." The Bella Coola say that the word is derived from *sewa*, a pillow, and that the meaning of *sewadjut* is a ceremony of "Pillowness," that is, resting, combined with pleasant relaxation. In spite of the number

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directions. Then the joyful owner was able to draw back her crystal and the sick woman at once recovered.

Another prerogative of the same nature is *Isubilia*. As the *kukusiut* are gathering and before the main ceremonial of the evening, the man or woman with this prerogative can display it if he so desires. He stands up, stamps, then bends down and begins to beat with a stick on the floor; the singers, who know what is to take place, quickly join in. This serves to concentrate the performer's power, consisting of the ability to scratch the external genital organs. The sticks continue to sound as the performer moves about the house, acting in accordance with his right, and at the same time rolling his eyes and licking his lips. Choosing either man or woman as he desires, he calls out his name, and the person addressed must come forward to take his hands. The power is thus transmitted and the one so chosen begins to scratch, with the same accompaniment of rolling eyes and licking lips.

"It is sweet," he cries.

The power is then returned to the owner, who later passes it to another victim, until the marshals decide it is time to proceed to the main rites of the evening. The use of this prerogative is a source of never-ending amusement to the *kukusiut*. The only explanation given of this somewhat peculiar ability is that it is practised by the supernatural beings in the land above. Like every other *kusiut* rite, it can be performed only by a person who owns a name in which it is embodied.

Sio'msta, the third of these prerogatives, is to imitate the action of holding sexual intercourse. Like the last, its use is limited to the house in which a dance is taking place, and can be carried out only while the audience is waiting for the main ceremony. The performer, man or woman, stands up with a rope pressed close across his stomach, held with hands clenched at the hips. It is said that in this position nothing can pass behind him. The singers and other *kukusiut* begin to beat time to concentrate the actor's power as he stamps around in a crouching posture, crying *hoip* and shaking his hips. Pre-

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424 sently he begins to grunt, and calls the name of either a man
*575 or a woman. The person so designated must take the per-
*796 former's hands, thus assimilating his power, and in his turn
787 begins to shake and grunt, amid the laughter of all. Presently
831 the "gift" is returned, and later passed to another recipient.
522 Sometimes a modest woman shakes her head instead of her
[776] hips, to the intense amusement of the audience. After some time the owner draws his power to himself and the main ceremony of the evening proceeds. It is said that the supernatural beings above perform *siö°msta.*

The Death of a *Kusiut*

*575 A detailed description of *kusiut* dances and ritual has now
766 been given, but certain special features still remain. One of
*796 these is the method of disposal of the body of a dead member
787 of the society. In dances which are completed in four days, there is little likelihood of the performer's death, but this is by no means uncommon during the long seclusion of a Cannibal for example. In this case there is no wailing, and the death is concealed from the uninitiated, sometimes even a wife being kept in ignorance of her husband's decease. A mask representing the patron of the dead man is hung in the house behind the fire as a constant reminder of what must be done. From the ceremonial point of view, the serious aspect lies in the fact that a call has come which has not been sent back, and which cannot be sent back by the receiver. The marshals discuss the matter and agree that it must pass to some *kusiut*, a near relative of the deceased, who is informed of the decision and does not dare refuse, even if he should wish to do so. After a delay of two or three days, the body is taken secretly to the grave and buried, while the *kukusiut* sing the dead person's song. This causes the call to shift to the chosen relative who completes the ceremony in due course. In the case of a Cannibal, for example, a considerable amount of time is allowed to elapse, and meanwhile the uninitiated are told that the *kukusiut* are still waiting and watching for his return.

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the *tsulkum*, *prompter*, is equally important, though less obvious. As many as one hundred songs may be in constant use in the course of a single *kusiut* season, and it is impossible for any one individual to remember them sufficiently well never to become confused when calling them out. Consequently, one or more prompters sit beside the announcer, ready to whisper to him the words of the next subdivision. Prompters are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the myths of all performers and, since they neither announce nor sing, they are able to concentrate their whole attention on remembering the words which have been considered suitable.

This somewhat complicated mechanism ensures a minimum of error in all important rites. Mistakes do creep in, however, and it is related with glee how on one occasion the singers completely forgot a text and substituted a description of a mask used at the rite in question. Moreover, even the solemnity of a *kusiut* dance cannot entirely check the love of the Bella Coola for practical joking. A blind singer once laid down his stick for a moment, whereupon one of his companions kicked it away. It appears to be virtually impossible for a man to sing unless he can accompany himself by tapping, and the frantic efforts of the sightless one to recover his baton almost betrayed his companions into obvious mirth. Occasionally, too, a prompter neglects his task[2] and the announcer is forced to improvise, while the leader endeavours to conceal the error by lengthening the pause between subdivisions.

Marriage songs, shaman songs, non-ceremonial songs, and a few others of special type are sung by an individual, unaccompanied. The technique is, therefore, quite different from that just described. Dance songs of all kinds should, if complete, have the three parts; these are indicated as *A*, *B*, and *C*

[2]During the winter of 1923-4 there was only one man in Bella Coola with sufficient skill and poise to act as announcer and prompter. He found it impossible to perform both duties and requested the aid of the writer as prompter. The texts were written down, and it was the writer's duty to sit beside the announcer, waiting for a nudge signifying that he had forgotten the next subdivision. From personal experience the writer can state that the task of prompter is wearying in the extreme.

533* 796* 575* 533* 796* 575* 522 533* [123]

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group. The moral code is not concerned with animals. The life of the Bella Coola would be unbearable to most white people, yet they find it far from unpleasant. They sigh at present conditions, but there is much to amuse them notwithstanding. If several people are talking together, one is sure to hear bursts of laughter every few minutes. It takes little to interest them; a story they have heard a hundred times, the troubles of a neighbour with his wife, the eccentricity of a white man, the stupidity of the investigator, any of these is enough to cause a hearty laugh. When collecting information, it was constantly necessary to joke with them; the most feeble witticism was enough, but they lost interest in the work unless kept smiling. Their sense of humour is not refined; jests about sexual matters are common and are enjoyed alike by men, women, and children. It is not that their tastes are perverted, but rather that they have no reticence in discussing this topic, so they find it easy to see the ludicrous aspects of a subject which is ever near the surface in their minds. They have no hesitation in poking fun at their friends; a successful practical joke, such as hiding the writer's tobacco, is enough to fill them with amusement. If the victim shows temporary resentment, the glee of his friends is complete, and shrieks of laughter usually terminate the trick.

Unless the white man who comes to live among the Bella Coola is unusually broad-minded, he is at first repelled by the dirt and untidiness prevailing everywhere; even the people themselves seem unnatural. He finds it difficult to realize the sincerity of their religious beliefs, and the manner in which these influence their daily lives is hard to grasp. The potlatch system appears so grotesque that it seems to reflect a psychology diametrically opposed to his own. The force of public opinion on personal conduct is almost incomprehensible. Gradually, however, he begins to understand the reasons underlying Bella Coola life. The potlatch becomes intelligible when regarded as a means of achieving fame; constant attention to supernatural beings is natural considering the firm conviction